

The State: Wilson pushes stimulus oversight board

<http://www.thestate.com/breaking/story/1062670.html>

Posted on Wed, Dec. 09, 2009

Wilson pushes stimulus oversight board

Congressman cites discrepancies in the reporting of jobs created

BY JAMES ROSEN

McClatchy Newspapers

South Carolina Rep. Joe Wilson, using his elevated national profile since his "You lie!" yell at President Barack Obama, introduced a bill Tuesday requiring that a special board be set up to track the number of jobs created by the \$787 billion economic stimulus plan.

Wilson, a Republican from Springdale, said his legislation had drawn 10 co-sponsors in advance of a news conference he scheduled for today at the U.S. Capitol.

"This is the people's money," Wilson told McClatchy. "Americans should understand what the billions and billions of dollars are being spent for."

The reporting last month on www.recovery.gov, the Obama administration's official stimulus Web site, of thousands of jobs in nonexistent congressional districts drew days of ridicule until it was corrected.

Wilson said that fiasco compelled him to write Obama and to author his measure. He also cited a report last month by the General Accounting Office, the nonpartisan investigative arm of Congress, which found "significant reporting and processing (stimulus) problems that need to be addressed."

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, which Obama signed into law Feb. 17, authorizes the creation of a five-member commission to monitor its operation and results.

Wilson wrote Obama last month to say he would advance a measure to create a 10-person oversight panel if the board authorized by the stimulus bill wasn't established; he said he received no reply.

Under the original stimulus measure, the advisory panel would make recommendations for preventing fraud or waste to the Recovery Accountability and Transparency Board, the new executive agency charged with implementing the plan to jumpstart the economy.

"I still hope the president will appoint the panel that he has the authority to appoint so that this legislation wouldn't even be necessary," Wilson said.

Wilson acknowledged that his heightened fame in the wake of his shout at Obama as the president spoke to Congress on Sept. 9 has increased his influence.

"I would say that my profile has assisted in bringing attention to this issue," he said. "I'm very grateful that I do have significant name recognition, and people are helping."

Wilson said 10,000 people across the country have signed an online petition supporting his legislation at www.joewilsonforcongress.com, www.redstate.com and other Web sites.

Reps. Bob Inglis of Greenville and Gresham Barrett of Westminster have co-sponsored Wilson's bill, along with eight other House Republicans: Jack Kingston of Iowa, Paul Broun of Georgia, Mark Souder of Indiana, Michele Bachmann of Minnesota, Marsha Blackburn of Tennessee, Jeff Miller of Florida, Randy Forbes of Virginia and Todd Akin of Missouri.

Under Wilson's measure, the president would appoint the stimulus panel's chairman and congressional leaders from both parties would name its other nine members.

Rosen covers Washington for McClatchy newspapers in South Carolina.